

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 1126

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: POST-ELECTORAL
ROUNDUP - DECEMBER 22

REF: PORT LOUIS 1125

SUMMARY: THE PARTY DIVISION REMAINS UNCHANGED FROM YESTER-
DAY, WITH FINAL RESULTS PENDING FROM TWO DISTRICTS. THE THREE
PARTIES ARE LIKELY TO FINISH AS FOLLOWS:

MMM 30 SEATS
IP 25 SEATS
PMSD 7 SEATS

ATTENTION IS NOW FOCUSED ON THE ALLOCATION OF THE REMAINING
EIGHT "BEST LOSER" SEATS BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION. IT
APPEARS THAT NO ONE WILL HAVE AN EASY TIME FORMING A GOVERN-
MENT, SINCE THE OUTCOME WAS SO CLOSE. END SUMMARY

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1. AS OF MORNING DECEMBER 22 PARTY DIVISION OF NEW ASSEMBLY
REMAINS AT 29 SEATS FOR MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM),
20 SEATS FOR INDEPENDENCE PARTY (IP), AND 7 SEATS FOR
MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD), WITH SIX SEATS
STILL TO BE DECIDED. COUNTING HAS RESUMED IN RAMGOOLAM'S
DISTRICT, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO RETURN THREE IP SEATS. BOTH

THE MMM AND THE IP HAVE DEMANDED A RECOUNT IN DISTRICT 14, WHICH RETURNED TWO IP SEATS AND ONE MMM SEAT. IT IS THEREFORE EXPECTED THAT FINAL RESULTS FOR 62 SEATS DECIDED IN VOTING DECEMBER 20 WILL BE: MMM 30 SEATS; IP 25 SEATS; PMSD 7 SEATS.

2. INTEREST NOW CENTERS ON EIGHT "BEST LOSER" SEATS TO BE CHOSEN BY ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION. THE FIRST FOUR OF THESE SEATS ARE AWARDED, ONE AT A TIME, TO LOSING CANDIDATES WHO SCORED THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF SUPPORT IN THEIR DISTRICTS, ACCORDING TO A COMPLEX FORMULA DESIGNED TO MATCH THE RELATIVE SIZE OF THE FOUR MAURITIAN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES (HINDU, MUSLIM, CHINESE AND "GENERAL POPULATION") WITH THE SIZE OF THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE ASSEMBLY. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHINESE COMMUNITY RATES AT LEAST TWO SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY, AND SINCE ONLY ONE CHINESE CANDIDATE WAS ELECTED (A MMM MAN) ONE OF THE FIRST FOUR "BEST LOSERS" WILL BE A CHINESE (HE WILL BE EITHER A PMSD OR AN IP MAN, FOR THE MMM RAN ONLY ONE CHINESE CANDIDATE WHILE THE OTHER TWO PARTIES RAN THREE EACH). THE MUSLIM AND GENERAL POPULATION COMMUNITIES APPEAR TO BE UNDER-REPRESENTED AS WELL. THE HINDU COMMUNITY IS ALREADY OVER-REPRESENTED. (BY COMMUNITY, THOSE ELECTED AND LEADING COMPRISE 40 HINDUS, 15 GENERAL POPULATION, 6 MUSLIMS, AND ONE CHINESE.)

3. THE SECOND GROUP OF FOUR "BEST LOSER" SEATS ARE AWARDED ONE AT A TIME, IN A FASHION TO KEEP THE FOUR COMMUNITIES PROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED, BUT FOR THESE FOUR SEATS PARTY AFFILIATION IS ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. THESE FOUR SEATS ARE AWARDED IN A MANNER TO RECTIFY AND "SKEWING" OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RELATIVE PARTY STRENGTHS WHICH EMERGED FROM THE ELECTIONS RESULTING FROM THE AWARD OF THE FIRST FOUR "BEST LOSER" SEATS. THUS, AFTER ALL EIGHT SEATS HAVE BEEN AWARDED THE THREE PARTIES SHOULD BE IN APPROXIMATELY THE SAME RELATIVE POSITIONS AS THEY ARE NOW. A LIKELY OUTCOME IS THAT FOUR "BEST LOSER" SEATS WILL GO TO THE MMM, THREE TO THE IP AND ONE TO THE PMSD. THE PARTY STANDINGS IN THE ASSEMBLY WOULD THEN BE:

MMM 34 SEATS
IP 28 SEATS
PMSD 8 SEATS

4. THE WORK OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION IN DECIDING THE ALLOCATION OF THESE "BEST LOSER" SEATS MAY WELL BE CRITICAL TO FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT. IF, AS SEEMS PROBABLE, THE MMM RECEIVES FOUR OF THE "BEST LOSER" SEATS, GIVING THE PARTY 34 SEATS IN ALL, IT WILL NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO FORM A GOVERNMENT

BY ITSELF. THE IP AND THE PMSD WOULD THEN HAVE THE OTHER 36 SEATS, AND PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM COULD HOPE TO FORGE THEM INTO A COALITION GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD, HOWEVER, BE EXTREMELY UNSTABLE IN VIEW OF ITS VERY THIN MAJORITY. IF IN THE OUTCOME OF THE "BEST LOSER" ALLOCATION, THE MMM ENDED UP WITH 35 SEATS (AND THE OTHER TWO PARTIES WITH 35) IT WOULD BE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT OF ANY KIND. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE MMM ASSEMBLY MEMBERS, REPRESENTING A WELL-ORGANIZED AND DISCIPLINED PARTY, ARE LIKELY TO STICK TOGETHER AND RESIST ANY ANTICEMENTS TO DESERT THE PARTY TO JOIN A COALITION UNDER RAMGOOLAM. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE MMM WILL BE ABLE TO ENTICE SOME IP AND/OR PMSD WINERS AWAY FROM THEIR PARTY ALLEGIANCE IN ORDER TO JOIN A MAJORITY MMM GOVERNMENT.

5. AS CAN BE SEEN FROM THE CLOSENESS OF THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME, THE GOVERNOR GENERAL WILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY (PERHAPS HIS ONLY IMPORTANT ROLE) IN TRYING TO ASSIST IN THE FORMATION
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OF A VIABLE GOVERNMENT, ONCE THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION HAS COMPLETED ITS TASK. NO MATTER WHAT GOVERNMENT IS FORMED -- IF ONE CAN BE -- THE PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION WILL BE SO UNSTABLE THT IT WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY GOVERNING THE COUNTRY OR EVEN STAYING IN POWER. THUS, ANOTHER ROUND OF ELECTIONS CAN BE ANTICIPATED, SOONER OR LATER, AND MOST PROBABLY SOONER. IN THIS EVENT ONE COULD HOPE THAT THE ANTI-MMM FORCES IN THE COUNTRY, WHO PROBABLY CONSTITUTE THE MAJORITY, WILL BE ABLE TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES IN A MANNER TO MEET THE MMM CHALLENGE AT THE POLLS, NOW THAT THEY KNOW THE DANGER. IN THE JUST-CONCLUDED ELECTIONS THESE ANTI-MMM FORCES WERE IN DISARRAY, CONCENTRATING ON ADVANCING THEIR OWN CANDIDACIES AND OFTEN FIGHTING WITH THEIR CLOSEST NATURAL ALLIES WHILE NEGLECTING THE COMMON THREAT OF THE MMM. IN THE FUTURE A FURTHER POLARIZATION OF THE ELECTORATE INTO MMM AND ANTI-MMM ARRAYS APPEARS LIKELY.

6. THE SHOCKING SIZE OF THE MMM VICTORY DOMINATES POST-MORTEM TODAY. SECONDLY, THE NUMBER OF INCUMBENT ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND SITTING MINISTERS WHO WENT DOWN TO DEFEAT IS STARTLING (SEE REFTL). OF THE OUTGOING CABINET ONLY THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITIES, ALL LABOR, WERE RE-ELECTED: RAMGOOLAM, RINGADOO, BOOLELL, BASANT RAI, BUSSIER AND R. GHURBURRUN, THE RESULTS MAKE CLEAR THE ANTI-INCUMBENT ANIMUS WHICH PREVAILED AMONG THE ELECTORATE. IN A LARGE NUMBER OF DISTRICTS VOTERS SINGLED OUT FOR DEFEAT THE LABOR PARTY (AND CAM) INCUMBENTS WHILE ELECTING THEIR RUNNING MATES WITH "NEW FACES." RAMGOOLAM MADE A SERIOUS ERROR (AGAINST THE WARNINGS OF MANY ADVISERS, E.G. HAWOLDAR) IN INSISTING ON RUNNING MOST OF THE OLD WAR-HOUSES OF THE PARTY. THE WARNINGS

THAT THEY HAD ANTAGONIZED THE ELECTORATE AND WOULD BE THROWN OUT WERE IGNORED, WITH SHATTERING EFFECTS FOR THE LABOR PARTY'S PERFORMANCE. CLEARLY A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF LABOR PARTY SUPPORTERS SPLIT THEIR TICKETS, WITH TWO VOTES FOR NEW LABOR FACES AND A THIRD VOTE FOR A NON-LABOR CANDIDATE. RAMGOOLAM IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE THIS MISTAKE AGAIN, IF HE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE.

7. RAMGOOLAM HAS MAINTAINED TOTAL SILENCE SINCE ELECTION DAY. DUVAL TOLD THE PRESS YESTERDAY, "I BOW TO THE VERDICT OF THE PEOPLE AND I HAVE NO REGRETS. I DID MY BEST TO EXPLAIN TO THE MAURITIAN PEOPLE THE RISKS THEY WOULD BE TAKING IN BRINGING A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT TO POWER. HE BLAMED THE UDM FOR COSTING THE PMSD A FEW CLOSELY CONTESTED SEATS. BERENGER BROKE DOWN WITH EMOTION WHEN HIS ELECTION WAS ANNOUNCED IN QUATRE BORNES AND HE WAS UNABLE TO ADDRESS THE CROWD. THE CERNEEN TODAY PUBLISHES A PICTURE OF HIM WEEPING, PRESUMABLY WITH JOY, JUST AFTER THE FINAL RESULT WAS ANNOUNCED.

8. THE ELECTORAL TURNOUT WAS A RECORD HIGH, MORE THAN 90 PERCENT. VOTING WAS CARRIED OUT WITH GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE, WITH ONLY VERY MINOR INSTANCES OF DISPUTES WHICH THE POLICE EASILY KEPT FROM GROWING INTO ANYTHING SERIOUS. THE POPULACE HAS REMAINED EXTREMELY CALM THROUGH THE COUNTING AND INTO TODAY, AGAINST EXPECTATIONS THAT THERE WOULD BE CELEBRATING AND REVENGE-TAKING THAT COULD EASILY GET OUT OF HAND. THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW BRIGHT SPOTS IN THE PICTURE TODAY. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THIS SITUATION OF CALM WILL CONTINUE FOR LONG, SINCE THE OUTCOME WAS SO CLOSE. THE MMM WILL BE ANXIOUS TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE COUNTRY, AND ITS ENEMIES WILL CERTAINLY TRY TO PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING. A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY AND INSTABILITY THEREFORE LIES AHEAD. KEELEY

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